

# MICHIGAN SUPREME COURT



## *Office of Public Information*

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### **ONLINE LEGAL SELF-HELP WEB CENTER LAUNCHED BY STATE COURT ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE**

LANSING, MI, January 19, 2005 – A new “Self-Help Center” on the State Court Administrative Office (SCAO) website is aimed at helping non-lawyers represent themselves in some legal matters.

SCAO is the administrative arm of the Michigan Supreme Court.

“Many people want to handle their own legal issues, but lack the basic information they need to represent themselves effectively,” said State Court Administrator Carl L. Gromek.

“All adult citizens have a constitutional right to represent themselves in court, but most non-attorneys don’t know where to look for legal information or what their responsibilities are as litigants,” Gromek said. “Our goal is to educate the public about what types of cases the courts handle, what information resources are available, and the obligations of self-representing litigants.”

Gromek added that the new feature “is a valuable resource for anyone who wants to learn more about Michigan’s justice system.”

Topics on the Self-Help Center include “Going to Court,” “How to Find Legal Information,” “Types of Matters the Courts Handle,” and “Resolving a Dispute without Going to Court.” The center provides an overview of the Michigan court system and describes the types of cases handled by various state courts.

The site also provides information on “Getting Legal Help,” including information about requesting a court-appointed attorney. Courts appoint attorneys to represent indigent people free of charge in cases involving criminal penalties and termination of parental rights. Court-appointed attorneys also act for children and mentally incapacitated people in certain cases.

For those who want an alternative to litigation, the site offers information about SCAO’s Community Dispute Resolution Program. The program, which is offered at 20 centers located throughout Michigan, allows Michigan citizens to resolve their legal disputes with the help of a trained mediator.

The Self-Help Center is available at <http://www.courts.michigan.gov/scao/selfhelp/selfhelphome.htm>.

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